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Subject: Fidelity to Conviction.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

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OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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X. The Name Above Every Name.
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XVII. Memorials of Divine Mercy.
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XIX. The Peace of God.
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THE SERMONS

OF

HENRY WARD BEECHER,

IN

Plymouth Church, Brooklyn.

FROM VERBATIM REPORTS BY T. J. ELLINWOOD.

"PLYMOUTH PULPIT,"

THIRD SERIES:

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PREFACE.

In this volume, sermons expounding the divine nature and unfolding the higher forms of Christian experience predominate. The nature of Christ, the agency of the Holy Spirit, the doctrine of the Trinity, have special prominence.

But other sermons, selected from a wide range of topics, accompany these; and it is hoped that every one may find in this volume instruction or consolation suited to his special need.

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

March 15, 1870.

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FIDELITY TO CONVICTION.

"Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him."—JOHN IX. 35—38.

This is the very affecting close of one of the most remarkable and dramatic passages of the history of our Lord which have been recorded. It was recorded by John. Almost every instance of the Master's experience which involves insight, which requires a sense of what is going on in men's thoughts and feelings, will be found more fully recorded by John than by the other Evangelists.

It seems that a blind man, well-known in the vicinity of Jerusalem, who had been blind from birth, sat begging, and that the Master, having compassion upon him, healed him of his blindness. The circumstances were so striking, the case was so public, and it happened so to strike the imagination of the people, and to lead them to infer the superior authority of Christ, that it produced a tremendous excitement. It was one of those little things which, happening to strike right, produced very disproportionate results from what one would have expected.

There were numbers of blind men healed by the Saviour; many lepers; many palsied; many afflicted with fevers and dropsies. His life was almost a continuous miracle of mercy. On many days it was impossible to instance the healings which he performed. And yet, no great excitement followed, except that of general wonder. There was no conflict under ordinary circumstances. But it was different in this case. On this occasion a very great conflict arose.

As soon as the man was healed (for Christ made a salve of spittle and clay, and anointed his eyes, and told him to go to the pool of Siloam, that was but a little distance from the temple, near which, doubtless, he sat—though that fact is not expressly stated—to wash; and he went and washed, and returned seeing)—as soon as he was healed, and came back, a buzz went through the whole neighborhood. For everybody knew this man. He was a landmark.

SUNDAY EVENING, March 6, 1870. LESSON: PSA. CIII. 1—18. HYMNS (Plymouth Collection): Nos. 1278, 1291, 1336.

"The neighbors therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he; others [very cautious folks] said, He is like him; but he said, I *am* he."

The man did not like to lose his personal identity just because he had got his sight. It is not very flattering to a man's self-love to go back among his neighbors and have folks doubting who he is, and what he is.

"Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened? He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus, made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash; and I went and washed, and I received sight. Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not."

You see perfect simplicity here. He was as child-like as a man could be. And this great miracle had been wrought upon him, not on account of any worth that was in him; not because he was knowledgeable; not because he had any relation to the kingdom of Christ. He was not eminent in station. He had no influence; he had no property; he had nothing except misery. And that was the whole and sole reason why this great miracle of God was performed upon him—his misery. That is reason enough in the sight of God. That a man is sinful, is a reason why he should have forgiveness. That a man is an enemy of God, is a reason why he should be accepted by love and educated to virtue. That a man is wandering far away, is a reason why he should be sought after and brought back. God measures his mercies by our need, and by his own generosity.

"They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind."

They went to the Pharisees just as now men go the minister with questions which they cannot answer themselves. And there was no impropriety in it, in such an instance as that. "Every man to his trade," it is said. If my watch is out of order, I never attempt to put it in order myself, but take it to the watch-maker. If my clothes need repairing I take them to the clothes-repairer. If I have a law question to be solved, I go to the lawyer. If I am sick, I go to the physician. And so it is in every sphere of life. If, therefore, one has casuistical questions, ethical doubts, it is proper for him to go to those who make these things their study. And the Jewish people went to the Pharisees.

Who were the Pharisees? They were the men who represented the patriotic purity of their times. They were the men who felt the burden of standing up for Palestine, as against foreign invaders. Not only that, they were the men who stood up for the old worship—not for the old theology; but for the old *worship*. They, therefore, addressed themselves in many ways to the pride and the self-love of the Jewish nation. Externally, there was very much about the sect of the Pharisees which was winning and commendable. There is no question but that on a very low plane they acted according to their sense of

duty. They loved their own people, and they loved their own hereditary institutions and worship; and they were willing, not only to be witnesses for them, but to suffer something for the maintenance of them. But, judged upon a higher plane, and by a spiritual law of truth, they were very proud, they were very selfish, and they never learned how to maintain the truth so as at the same time to make it invariably humane, merciful, sympathetic. Of this they were ignorant; and they were constantly stumbling into morality; and were constantly using their orthodoxy as a screw by which to crush somebody, or something. This set the Master very vehemently against them. They were men to whom the theory of truth was more precious than the people to whom the truth was sent. They were men to whom Judaism was more precious than the Jews. They were men who loved their party, and who, for the sake of their party, would give up everything that the party was good for—namely, the benefits which it could give to poor, suffering humanity.

Such were the Pharisees; and to them, as the teachers and authoritative expounders of whatever was peculiar to the Jewish economy, the people brought this man, that they might solve the difficulty. For they brought him, evidently, not because it was a kind thing that had been done, but because they did not know what to make of it.

There must have been something more than is stated in this narrative. We judge it by the shadow which it casts. It evidently existed in the minds of the people. We see it in the fact of their bringing him to the Pharisees, not only, but in the peculiar state of mind in which the Pharisees met the question. It is very plain that the working of this miracle had produced a very powerful impression in favor of the divinity of Christ himself, as an antagonistic force to the Pharisees; for they were thrown instantly upon self-defence.

Therefore, the crowd, that had this kind of vague influence exerted upon them, went to the Pharisees to see what they thought about this man—as much as to say, "Here is a man who has healed one that was born blind; and is not this the Son of God? Is not this the promised Messiah?" Evidently that was the lurking feeling, the motive, which led them to go to the Pharisees. They wanted to see what the Pharisees had to say about it.

"It was the Sabbath-day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes Then again the Pharisees also [as the citizens had done] asked him [the man] how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see."

It was not necessary, in the state of feeling, in the temper, which existed among the Parisees, to come any nearer than that. Already Jesus had made his presence fill the whole land. He was in everybody's thoughts. Therefore, when the man said "he," it must have

been Jesus that was meant, as there was but One who could be designated by that term.

"Therefore said some of the Pharisees, this man is not of God."

Why! that is a queer inference. Here was a man that found a poor wretch who lived by begging; who, being deprived of the means of going about and helping himself, was an object of universal compassion and charity. Here was a man that was a stranger to this poor creature; that had perhaps never seen him before; that held no relation of kinship to him; and that, for no earthly reason but that of general compassion, had healed him. And the man was rejoicing in their midst with full eyesight. One would think that everybody would have said, "Whoever you are, you have done a divine thing." But when this man was brought, and he testified that Jesus had restored his sight, some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not of God." Why? Was not that a divine beneficence? Was not that a thing worthy of God? To raise a suffering creature out of his darkness and into light and joy—is not that divine? Oh! hear them:

"This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath day."

What is the sabbath-day? It is a conventional arrangement. It is a mere artificial custom. It is a very good thing; but it is a part of the world's harness. It is a mere servant of man. As Christ said, on another occasion, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath." And here, in the place of this miracle, of this wondrous humanity and mercy, there were Pharisees found who stroked their beard, and looked upon the man with stern eye, and said, "He is not of God; for he does not keep Sabbath!"

There are men who are utterly dead to all moral sensibility, but quick, jealous, in regard to any church arrangement—anything that a priest has charge of; anything that the ecclesiastical authorities have authority over. Not to keep an hour, not to read a lesson, not to put a bow or a garment on just right—that is a sin; but to wound a fellow man, or to neglect to relieve a fellow man who is in trouble, is a matter of very little consequence! To do a kindness to a creature that is suffering is well enough in its way; but under these circumstances it was not "orthodox," and so was to be condemned!

Here is a case that looks very hateful when we see it as having occurred two thousand years ago, in a Pharisee; and it ought to look just as hateful to-day when you see it in yourselves. A great fundamental humanity ought to stand higher in every man's regard than any philosophy, than any observance of days, than any ecclesiastical arrangement, or than any civil law.

But the Pharisees were not all so fierce as that. There were some good men among them. Because, when this thing was propounded as the theory,

"Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them."

They resort, then, to the man, once more, and give another turn to the screw.

"They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet."

He understood the question to be, What further was the impression that you derived? And he, in his simplicity (for he was good-tempered yet) said, "He is a prophet."

That was all he knew about it. That was a real Jewish answer. Anybody that was on a higher level; anybody that was, for instance, a teacher, and a good man, was supposed, in some way or other, to be a prophet.

"But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight."

What was the matter? Why did not they believe it? It was a plain case. There was no doubt about it. What was there that hindered their believing it? It was a latent sense, an inward perception, that if they admitted this miracle, it was going to damage their sectarian interest. That was the trouble with them.

Now see to what ingenuity, to what twistings, to what contortions, to what moral obliquities, this secret, silent, organized social selfishness will lead men.

"They called the parents of him that had received his sight."

Now we shall have a pretty scene. Of course parents love their children; and any favor done to their children will swell their hearts with gratitude even more than if it were done to themselves. He that blesses my child twice blesses me. He that blesses my child—let whoever will speak against him, or persecute him—I am his friend, and I will stand up for him, and he shall never want a defender as long as my heart beats. And every true parent feels so. Every generous nature feels that a kindness done to a friend is more than a kindness done to himself. So we shall see a spectacle of real, enthusiastic parental gratitude—*perhaps!*

"They asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? How then doth he now see?"

Rather a chilling question.

"His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age, ask him; he shall speak for himself."

Oh! the cowards! The mean-spirited sneaks! See how they dodged; and that, too, right in the face of this royal benefaction.

Now, is not that human nature, after all? Do we not still see just such cowards—men that are afraid—men in whom there is no honor and no love to hold them up so that they will face anything that is dangerous to them?

What was the matter with these parents? Why were they afraid to speak out their honest thoughts? For they believed, just as much as the man himself, not only that he was born blind, but that Jesus had healed him. What was the matter? I will tell you what it was.

"These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews; for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue."

Now, there is an argument for you. The Jews had set that up as a threat and a terror; and these poor cowardly parents stood shuddering under the shadow of it, and did not dare call, I will not say their soul, but their *son*, their own. Yes, they believed he was their son; they were sure about that; but as to who healed him they were not so sure. So to get rid of the consequences of answering this question, they tucked it off on to their son, saying, "Ask him."

What a mean, beggarly spirit! I want you to despise it soundly; for by-and-by you will have to see the same thing in yourselves; and it is well for you to be prepared. I want you should be ashamed of being afraid to stand up for your principles and for your affections.

"Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him."

Well, the case had not gone very well so far! The Pharisees evidently were not united. They had made no impression on the popular mind. They had not secured anything that was defensory on their part. Here was this damaging miracle that was threatening to produce a popular impression in favor of the Messiahship of Jesus; and they could not make head against it.

"Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him [how devout people will be when they have a purpose for it!], Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner."

That settled it, then! If this man had been accustomed to receive his notions from authority, instead of using the judgment and conscience which God gave him, that would have been the end of the matter, and there probably would never have been any account of this history. But, though this man did not set out to be a hero, see how beautiful he made fidelity to one's convictions to appear.

"He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not; one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."

Oh! that hateful fact! That was just the thing that they wanted to suppress; and here the man blurted it out again—*I was blind, and born blind, and I see, and that man gave me my sight: make the best of it.* That did not content them.

"Then they said to him again, what did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes?"

The man's patience rather failed him. There was something too insulting in their way.

"He answered them, I have told you already, and you did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? Will ye also be his disciples? Then they reviled him."

Of course they did. That is the usual way in a discussion of this kind. They had got into the marrow of the argument now.

"They said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is. The man answered and said unto them, Why, herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes."

It was as if he had said, What is the use of having spiritual teachers that do not know as much as that? And that rather went against them.

"Now we know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was *born* blind. If this man were not of God he could do nothing."

Brave fellow! How well he stood up for his benefactor! What a sermon he preached!—and he never was ordained, either.

Now it is their turn. And their discourse is now divided into two parts—first, theoretic; and second, practical. The theoretic was this:

"Thou wast altogether born in sins; and dost thou teach us?"

That was blasphemy against the Pharisees.

The practical part was:

"And they cast him out."

Here is a sermon with two heads—the theory and the practice.

It is at this stage that the passage which I have selected for our text comes in. The whole thing had passed. A man sat begging, thoughtless of any mercy—perhaps expecting a dole of a penny; but instead of that he received his sight. It was the greatest gift that he could have received. For, he that has been blind, and that receives his sight, receives the sun, the moon, and the stars. He receives the day and the night. He receives all things that grow. He receives all things that are beautiful. And the face of father and mother, the face of wife and child, the face of all fair things on the globe, go with the gift of sight. It is the simple putting of the divine finger upon the eye. And with the opening of the eye comes all the glory of the heavens and of the earth. And he that reached out his hand for a penny, received the whole world, in being healed.

And then came the tumult among the people; the questionings among the neighbors; the controversy between him and the Sanhedrim; and the excommunication. And when a man was excommunicated, he might as well have been dead. For all social connection with him was broken. No man might entertain him, nor even speak to him, if it was the *greater* excommunication. On him the whole public sentiment concentered, and he was a cast-away. Nobody dared to say that he was his friend. Nobody dared to speak for him. Nobody dared to take him by the hand. Nobody dared to take him into his house, or to give him employment. For there was that same authority that

had excommunicated him, threatening to excommunicate any that should befriend him. Therefore he was damned, so far as ecclesiastical authority could damn him.

Our Saviour meant to do this man a great kindness; but see what a great disaster he brought upon him. The man might very well have said, "What to me is this eyesight? It comes too late. I can learn no trade. I own no land. I can no longer beg. I have lost my country. I have lost my religion. I have lost my friends. I am a miserable outcast. I might better be a leper, and have men pity me and show mercy to me, than be a well man, with restored eyesight, and have nothing but starvation." He might very well have said this in his loneliness. I do not know that he had a single one of these thoughts. I believe he did not think anything of the sort. For he seems to have been made of sterling good stuff. He seems to have been an honest, straightforward, courageous nature.

It was at this dark period of his history that the Master sought him —for that he did seek him there can be no doubt. He did not leave nor forsake him when he had taken the first step toward ameliorating his condition. He followed him with his sympathy. And it seems that when he heard that he had come to grief, he went and hunted him up.

"Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him [that unquestionably conveys the idea of continuous searching, and suspended action.] he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him."

Contrast this man, and his simple, quiet heroism, with the proudest of all those whose history has gone in review before us. How much nobler he was than the professional teachers of morality! How much nobler he was than his own parents! And his nobility all sprung, not from the fact that he was wise, that he had knowledge, or that he had done any extraordinary thing. He was knowledgeable but to a very limited extent; and he could not boast of any great achievements. But he stood by the light which he had. He did not wait for more. He acted according to the full light that he possessed—which is more than many of you do. You want to wait till all doubts are solved; till you can see through doctrines, in every direction, to the utmost bound; till you have made investigation into creeds, and into churches, and into services, and into ceremonies. Very few men are willing to trust the simple light and testimony of their own consciences. But this man, without waiting to know what further there was in truth, when it was called in question, stood up, at peril and risk, for it, according to the light which he had. He was not ashamed of his Benefactor, as many men are, who know that all that they have is by the grace of God, and yet

are ashamed of God. He was not ashamed of the name of him who had healed his eyesight. On the contrary, he bore witness of that name when it cost him all that life was worth to him. Though he was cast out for the witness he bore, he still remained faithful.

But notice, that a man who suffers for doing what is right, is never so near to God as when he seems to be furthest from him. This man might have said, "Oh! why did he come near me, at any rate? Why did he get me into this peril and difficulty? He had better left me alone." I do not believe he ever thought of it. I believe the nature of the man was such as to lead him to say, "I had better be a whole man, in the possession of my senses, if I do starve, than to sit there a miserable cripple-eyed beggar." He loved full manhood, and large manhood, and sat there, doubtless, thinking, wondering and waiting; and the Saviour was hunting him up; was looking for him; was following him.

Is there any man here who has taken one single step in the direction of duty, and seems to have got into difficulty by it? There are a great many people who do that. I know men who undertake to make crooked things straight in money-matters; and it seems as though they only made their case worse. I know men who are living in defiance of the laws of morality; and the light dawns on their minds, and they begin to act according to their secret consciousness of right and wrong, and they seem to themselves to get into a worse place than they were ever in before. I know men who set their moral sense against the domination of their passions; and it seems as though they only made their passions tyrannical. Never was it so hard for them to refrain from profanity; never was it so hard for them to speak the truth, never was it so hard for them to keep their temper, never was it so hard for them to rein in their imperious appetites and passions, as when they undertake to do right. The first steps seem to themselves only to sink them deeper. They begin to see; but they are cast out of sympathy; they are cast away from help, apparently.

No! Never has a man undertaken one step in the right direction, and begun to suffer for it, that Christ did not look after him. You may not see him; he may not be visible to you just yet; but he is on your track. He will find you. Do not murmur, do not repine, that you have taken one step. Do not be sorry that you have begun to see. You ought to have seen long ago.

Oh, drunkard! oh, lustful man! oh, illicit lover of pleasure! oh, dishonest man! oh, incipient swindler! oh, perverter of the young! are you beginning to see? And does it seem to you as though the darkness thickened around about you, and as though the difficulties were more than you ever before knew them to be? Do not be dis

couraged nor faithless. The Christ that has led you so far is not going to abandon you. He stands by your side already. So far you have gone in your own strength; and now comes Jesus to you, who has opened your eyes, and says, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God." You must go up from transgression to morality; and you must go from morality a step higher, into faith.

And no man who has been whelmed in wickedness, and means to extricate himself from it, can do it by the mere force of his own resolution, or by his own volition. A man must have power to take the first step toward his own reformation; and having taken that first step, he must take the second.

Now Christ stands, to-night, by the side of every man who has taken one step, and says, "Will you take hold of the hand of the living God?" And are you not willing to take the simple step which this man took?

"He said, who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe."

How straight to the mark this man's thoughts flew! How true his purposes were! There was an essential nobility in him. He was a hero, in a small way—an obscure hero.

"And he worshipped him.'

I would rather have been that man than to have been the high-priest. I would rather have been that man than to have been Herod, or any of his Court. I would rather have been that man than to have been Cæsar, who was reigning at Rome. There was not a man with a crowned head or with a sceptered hand; there was not a man deep in treasure, nor a poet, nor an orator, seeking and winning praise, in all the earth, who, after all, had the stature of this ignorant, simple-minded man, who was true to the light he had, who found Christ, and knew when he found him, and who, with the simplicity of a child that when the mother opens her arms, runs to her bosom, and clasps its hands about her neck, ran to Christ, when he was revealed to him, and threw his arms about him, and loved him, and was saved.

Ages have gone past; the darkness of revolution has whelmed the earth; but still rising above the gloom of the distant past is the light of this simple example of fidelity, of willingness to know Christ, of willingness to believe, and of willingness to worship.

I draw near to every man who is periled for the sake of the truth, to-night, and say, Do not be afraid of being cast out. No matter if your church does disown you; the Lord Jesus Christ is mightier than any church. No matter if your neighbors do desert you; the Lord Jesus Christ is more to you than all the men in any neighborhood or community could be. No matter if your parents foreswear you; the

Lord Jesus Christ is better to you than parents. No matter if your own selves seem to sink in solitariness and in darkness; the Lord Jesus Christ is yours, and he offers not simply to continue his past mercies to you, but to take you by the hand, and lead you on to higher and nobler experiences. Will you accept that Saviour who draws near to you to-night?

Oh! there are present those that I know, and there are here still more that I do not know personally, to whom my words are as piercing as a sword. There are consciences that rise up to the touch of these truths. There is a consciousness in many and many a heart that fairly quivers as I speak. There are persons within the sound of my voice who do know that their eyes have been opened; and who know the state that they are in; and by their side stands the Lord Jesus Christ, though they may not, for the moment, know that it is he. Their very trouble is Jesus. That which they call darkness is the very shadow of God which falls upon them. And the voice of God comes to them, to-night, and says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to the salvation of your soul."

Will you believe? Will you look up, and say, "Lord, I believe," and worship? Do that, and upon you shall rise the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. But if you turn away from Him that speaketh; if in this solemn hour of your experience, when you have been brought to the very point of rectitude, to the very point of reformation, to the very point of conversion—if now you turn back, you put Christ to an open shame by your continual and habitual refusal; and upon you must rest forever and forever the consequence of this refusal.

Think better of it, and make this night the night of your emancipation. Throw away, to-night, all the hindrances and all the obstacles that are about you, and register, as your vow, HENCEFORTH I AM THE LORD'S.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We come, O blessed Saviour! in the familiar way of our own experience—the way that thought has trod, the way of the angels' flight, the way of sorrow, and the way of joy. For in joy and in sorrow we have prayed unto thee. Angels have borne petitions and brought back answers of mercy. And thou thyself didst pray, in the mountain, and at midnight, and often, with thy disciples, and hast taught us to pray. And our own hearts have sought to ease themselves in trouble by prayer. We have through prayer made known our gladness and our gratitude in joys that lighted our world-face. And we have found rest from the tongues of men, from the fears of fortune, from the importunities of our own passions, from all that can harass and vex, in the silence and solitude of our closet. There thou hast revealed thyself. There thou hast made us to be the sons of peace. The witness of the Spirit hath been given us that we are the children of God; that we are of the household of faith. And thou hast made it sweet to pray. Nor can we refrain from praying, always and everywhere, our very thoughts moving as in choral gladness in the recognition of thy daily presence and of thy daily power and mercies.

We thank thee, O Lord, that though thou art not visible, thou dost communicate with us, by thy presence, so that we know that thou art. Thou dost speak inwardly to us, not as to the body by the lip, but by the Spirit to the spirit. And we know that thou art near in love to refresh, to cheer, to encourage hope, to rebuke sin. We love thy fidelity. We are glad for thy wholesome strokes. We do not desire a Leader that would permit us to wander; a Teacher that would not correct; a Parent that would not chastise. We thank thee for that fidelity which brings pain, and with pain healing.

Grant, we pray thee, that we still may have that same care. Thou hast never forsaken us, nor ceased to be faithful. We desire still the ministration of pain, burdens, yokes, crosses, the rod, thorns, whatever is best. What didst not thou bear for us? Shalt thou suffer for the sins of the world, and we not suffer for our own sins? Is the disciple better than the Master?

Oh! may we rebuke that spirit within us which goes forth every day murmuring, and wondering why we are dealt with as we are. Give us a more wholesome and manly disposition, that we may rejoice to suffer with Christ, and to make up in our body that which was lacking in his suffering. Grant that we may rejoice to be called the disciples of him who is the crowned Sufferer. And we pray that thou wilt grant that through suffering we may come to faith, and patience, and stability.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt accept our thanksgiving for all past mercies, and our ardent desires for mercies in days to come. Lead us safely through this life, amidst its care, its toil, its danger, its piercing temptations, its business pleasures, its dissipations, and its allurements thereby. Oh! let us have thy sure guidance. Give to us that inward joy which they have who know that Christ is the Captain, that he leads, that he will defend, and that he will bring victory.

Grant, we pray thee, that thy blessing may rest upon the services of this evening; upon the exposition of thy word; upon our service of devotion; upon our thought and meditation. And grant that all the blessing of the Sabbath-day may not expend itself upon this day. May the food which we have received serve us to go many days down through the wilderness. May we carry our joys out of the sanctuary, that they may sing to us in the desolate places of the world. May we comfort one another with truths as pilgrims that walk by the way. And so may we cheer and strengthen each other's hands. Thus may we go on until at last we all meet in the heavenly land, to recount our toils, and rejoice in our victory.

And we will give the praise of our salvation to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

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